

# ***Shakin' the classroom***

## ***Spreading alternative knowledge sharing methods***

### **Please briefly explain the knowledge sharing method/approach/tool**

What are the main processes? What are the expected outcomes? In what ways does that method bring change or represent an alternative to existing or dominant knowledge sharing settings and methods?

Loesje is a writers collective founded in 1984 in the Netherlands. Over the years, this now international network has developed its own method of activist writing in public space. At its core is a creative writing workshop which is radically collective in its refusal of authorship - all writings are signed by the imaginary girl Loesje - and circular collaborative writing in which all participants add on to each other. After some warmup writing games, workshop is centered around circulating papers, each with one topic (usually a bit more topics than participants) which then change hands as everyone is invited to add their own views to the paper. Collaboration in such a non-hierarchical setting proceeds through the process of editing, selecting favourite texts, printing and finally distributing one-liners in the form of posters. Posters or in some cases flyers are finally glued, posted, shared (in a digital format), donated or in any other way distributed collectively by all the participants of the workshop. The goal of the method itself is primarily to offer an effective and publicly visible way to express one's views to groups that are often on the margin. At the same time however, it effectively serves as a knowledge sharing process.

### **In which way is this method alternative? (up to 200 words)**

How does it try to bring change or represent an alternative to existing or dominant knowledge sharing settings and methods?

I would say that this method brings several important changes. One, it opens the world of creative writing to everyone, which is often a very specialized ambient for "writers". Two, it is at the same time non-hierarchical (no one is telling anyone what to write about or how) but at the same time collective which is different from the usual solitary setting of creative writing. Three, it is also very accessible, since people are often encouraged by the anonymity as well as the possibility to be inspired or even work on texts already written by others. Finally, it is also very quick way of getting one's own view into the public, which usually takes one long afternoon, which makes it very immediate.

### **What are your experiences with the method? (up to 200 words)**

In case you have created, tested or experienced the method, what are your experiences? How have you applied the method? Would you change anything or suggest further development?

I have been introduced to the method back in 2002 and have spent following 10 years practicing it in numerous international settings, with participation in over 200 workshops. I have seen it at play with various participants: from primary school children (12-14 yrs), to professional writers and so on. Every time, the method slightly changes - the topics, the warm-up games, the editing process and dissemination. So I couldn't say that there is one thing worth changing. Instead, the method needs to be applied with the context in mind.

### **In your opinion, for what kind of pedagogical contexts, settings, participants and/or objectives is this method best suited for? (up to 200 words)**

E.g. age, educational level, cultural and professional background, etc. Did it prove useful or successful in particular contexts and for particular objectives?

I have used this method as a common ground in numerous projects that dealt with intercultural dialogue, post-conflict communication, violence prevention and so on. Seemingly non-personal participation opens possibilities for exchange and commonality that is in those cases very useful. Such "sensitive" circumstances are in my opinion a good place for the method to shine. Another setting in which the

method can be applied with success is with children or older groups who feel excluded and deprived. It offers an easy way to get out of one's own immediate circles. As I have wrote above, it can be very encouraging.

**What are the requirements for applying this method? (up to 300 words)**

Are there any requirements or limits in terms of location, number or profile of participants, tools and devices, time constraints and other? Are there certain skills, sensitivities or relations that need to be developed or assumed for the method to be successfully applied? What are the crucial points to pay attention to when implementing the method in different contexts? Are there any contexts for which this method is not best suited?

Tools and setting for the methods are fairly simple. There should be seating, tables and some basic writing equipment at hand for the very creative part. Later on, to do the layout and to print posters/flyers, basic office equipment is used. The key limitation, in my opinion, is the duration of the process - although it take comparably short time from writing to publishing - it still takes hours to go through it. I would say, if one day is at disposal, it can be applied in its fullest form. Other limitation is that it is language/text based method so it requires knowledge of the same language and some writing fluency.

**If possible, please briefly explain the context in which the method/tool/approach has been developed. (up to 200 words)**

Who were the main actors? What were the main reasons/motivations/inspirations behind the creation? Which previous developments have influenced it? If relevant, in what ways did the method/tool develop or change over time or in different locations/contexts?

In the mid 80s, a group of Dutch satirists, journalists and writers from Arnhem joined to make a public campaign. They wanted to offer an alternative to the gloomy public atmosphere, so they published and distributed kind, thoughtful, satiric and sometimes comic one-liners signed by the little girl Loesje. Later on, they have pursued more political statements and even run for local office as a very ironical move in critique of the official politics. What stayed behind those early days, is the group of devotees and the method which has spread further. In the early 90s after the fall of the Berlin wall, one Loesje crew bought a van and headed East to see what is behind the curtain. This is when international groups started forming in many countries across Europe. In 2005, the international office opened in Berlin to further support the spread of the method and organisation.

The method itself is very influenced by many similar creative writing tools and exercises, without any clear link to any other. It has also developed within these numerous groups.

**Could you provide any relevant testimonies?**

If possible, please provide testimonies, reflections, evaluations and statements about the method, by yourself or method's author(s) or other users.

**Additional references and links**

If possible, please provide additional links, literature, instructions and/or other relevant content.

<https://www.loesje.org>